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News Release

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The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council will hold public meetings from August 19-22, 1996 at the Town and Country Inn, 2008 Savannah Highway, Charleston, South Carolina; telephone: (800) 334-6660 or (803) 571-1000.

Council to Reconsider 1996-97 King Mackerel Total Allowable Catch

At the August meeting in Charleston, SC, the South Atlantic Council will reconsider the Atlantic Migratory group king mackerel TAC set in June for the 1996-1997 fishing year.

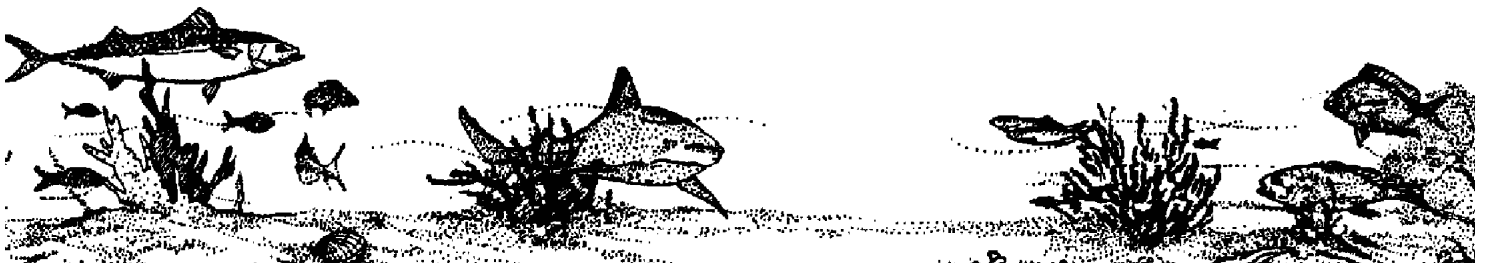
At the June meeting in Key West, the council voted to set the '96-'97 Atlantic migratory group king mackerel TAC at 6 million pounds, lowering the quota by 1.3 million pounds from the 1995-1996 fishing season. The council looked within the 4.1-6.8 million pound allowable biological catch range for this species to set the TAC.

The lower TAC raised concerns of a possible early closure of the fishery thereby preventing fishermen in North Carolina access to late migrating fish in that area. The council used the best scientific data available at the time, considering both the Stock

Assessment and Mackerel Advisory Panels' recommendations for setting the quota.

The Council will revisit this issue based on the recent Gulf Group king Mackerel Stock Assessment which, as the result of a workshop to review data and analytical methods used in the 1996 assessment, raised the natural mortality rate from 0.175 to 0.2 and removed the groundfish survey as an index of recruitment. This year's assessment also included a new bycatch estimate of recruitment which was not included last year. Some of these changes may be relevant to the Atlantic king mackerel stock.

The council may vote to modify the framework request by revising the TAC for Atlantic group king mackerel. The public is welcome to comment (see page 2 for meeting and comment times).



Council's August Meeting Agenda

The next council meeting will take place from August 19-22, 1996 at the Town and Country Inn, 2008 Savannah Highway, Charleston, SC; telephone: (803) 571-1000.

Monday, August 19

1:30 pm - 5:00 pm The Advisory Panel Selection Committee will meet in closed session to develop recommendations for appointment of advisory panel members.

Tuesday, August 20

8:30 am - 12:00 pm The Controlled Access Committee will meet jointly with the Snapper Grouper Committee to review the options paper for Snapper Grouper Amendment 9 and develop recommendations for Snapper Grouper Amendment 9 options to take to public hearing.

1:30 pm - 5:00 pm The Snapper Grouper Committee will meet to review the options paper for Snapper Grouper Amendment 8.

Wednesday, August 21

8:30 am - 12:00 pm The Snapper Grouper Committee will meet to develop recommendations for Snapper Grouper Amendment 8 options to take to public hearing.

1:30 pm - 5:00 pm The Mackerel Committee will meet to review the status of the 1996 king mackerel catch, review the status of trip limits, and review the Gulf King Mackerel Assessment before reconsidering the South Atlantic king mackerel total allowable catch. The Committee will also discuss the incidental allocation of mackerel in the shark fishery.

Thursday, August 22

8:30 am - 6:00 pm Council Session

8:45 am - 9:15 am The council will hold chairman and

vice chairman elections.

9:15 am - 10:00 am The full council will receive the Controlled Access Committee Report before taking public comment and approving Snapper Grouper Amendment 9 for public hearing.

10:15 am - 11:30 am The full council will receive the Snapper Grouper Committee Report before taking public comment and approving Snapper Grouper Amendment 8 for public hearing.

11:30am - 12:00 pm The full council will meet in closed session to receive the Advisory Panel Selection Committee report and appoint advisory panel members.

1:30 pm - 2:30 pm The full council will receive the Mackerel Committee report before taking public comment and reconsidering the South Atlantic king mackerel total allowable catch.

2:30 pm - 3:00 pm The full council will hear a report on the Ad Hoc Bycatch Reduction Device Advisory Panel meeting.

3:00 pm - 3:30 pm - Dr. Bill Hogarth will present a report on the NMFS Highly Migratory Species Program.

3:45 pm - 4:15 pm Dr. Andrew Brod will give a presentation on individual transferable quotas in the Atlantic wreckfish industry.

4:15 pm - 4:45 pm The full council will receive a report on the socio-cultural survey of snapper grouper fishermen.

4:45 pm - 6:00 pm The full council will hear a report on the council chairmen's meeting, review the status of Magnuson Act Amendments and reauthorization, receive agency and liaison reports, and discuss other business.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional councils, conserves and manages fish stocks from three to 200 miles off North and South Carolina, Georgia and east Florida shores.



Council to Approve Snapper Grouper Amendments 8 & 9 Options for Public Hearing

Amendment 8 Proposes Traditional Management Measures

The council's Snapper Grouper Committee met in February, April, May and June, 1996 to review and revise the Snapper Grouper Amendment 8 options paper before sending it to the full council for public hearing approval. The committee hopes to finalize recommendations for these options at the August meeting.

Amendment 8 proposes to reduce fishing pressure on certain snapper grouper species by implementing traditional management measures. The following is an overview of the actions being considered:

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| ACTION 1 | Revise the overfishing definition |
| ACTION 2 | Implement red porgy size and bag limits; |
| ACTION 3 | Implement red porgy trip limit; |
| ACTION 4 | Implement black sea bass minimum size limit; |
| ACTION 5 | Create a black sea bass special management zone; |
| ACTION 6 | Implement black sea bass bag limits |
| ACTION 7 | Require escape panels and rings on black sea bass pots; |
| ACTION 8 | Modify logbook reporting requirements; |
| ACTION 9 | Implement measures to protect greater amber-jack stocks during the spawning season (expanding closure, reducing bag limit, prohibiting retention and sale during this time); |
| ACTION 10 | Implement bag limit and quota for vermilion snapper, increasing size limits; |
| ACTION 11 | Establish bag limits, TACs, trip limit, increase size limit for gag; |
| ACTION 12 | Establish a transit zone in the Florida Keys for possession of fish traps in the South Atlantic EEZ; |
| ACTION 13 | Limit allowable gear for snowy grouper, golden tilefish and yellowedge grouper to bottom longline only; |
| ACTION 14 | Specify allowable gear for the fishery; |
| ACTION 15 | Implement a seasonal closure for all snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic EEZ; |
| ACTION 16 | Implement a flat trip limit for mid-shelf snapper grouper species; |
| ACTION 17 | Implement an aggregate temperate mid-shelf species quota; |
| ACTION 18 | Establish species specific recreational/commercial allocation ratios; |
| ACTION 19 | Establish regulations for Bahamian-caught snapper grouper species landed in the U.S. |

Amendment 9 Proposes to Limit the Number of Vessels and Control Effort in the Snapper Grouper Fishery

The Snapper Grouper Amendment 9 options paper contains two sets of options for controlling access to the snapper grouper fishery. The first set of options involves limiting the number of vessels in the snapper grouper fishery based on certain criteria; the second set of options involves effort control and other controlled access measures for those who meet the criteria under the first set of options.

Currently, the proposed action for limiting the number of vessels in the snapper grouper fishery is to limit permit holders to those who held valid snapper grouper permits for 1993, 1994, and 1995 calendar years. There are seven other options, ranging from using the control date of July 30, 1991 for limited entry in the fishery, to not limiting the number of participants in the fishery at all.

The effort control and other controlled access options include the possible establishment of endorsements, trip limits, qualifications for permit renewals and permit transferability, and provide for the possible subdivision of the management unit into three sub-units.

The Controlled Access Committee will review the Amendment 9 options at the August meeting in Charleston, SC before making committee recommendations for public hearing. If the options are approved, public hearings will be scheduled to solicit input from the public on Amendment 9.